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Tropical Products Institute

G101

The market for asparagus in selected Western European countries

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November 1975 Tropical Products Institute 56/62 Gray's Inn Road London WC1X 8LU
Ministry of Overseas Development

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Tropical Products Institute
ISBN: 0 85954 0480

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NOTES

1. Metric tonnes and kilogrammes are the standard units of weight used throughout this report, but where the UK market is concerned weights are often given in pounds as this is the unit which the trade uses.

2. Import values and unit prices for importing countries are shown in their national currencies for the following reasons:

   (a) During the late 1960's and early 1970's there were several revaluations and devaluations and this, together with the floating of various currencies made the use of a standardised unit extremely difficult and unrealistic, particularly as regards following trends in individual markets.

   (b) Exporters no doubt wish to know the price structure and likely returns for their produce in the currencies in which they will be paid; these will in general be the national currencies of the countries concerned. However, there is a section using standardised prices, pence (p) (100p = £1), where inter-country comparisons are made.

3. It should be noted that throughout the text the Federal Republic of Germany and Belgium/Luxembourg are referred to as Germany and Belgium respectively.

Summary and conclusions

The market for asparagus in selected Western European countries

1. Asparagus is indigenous to temperate regions but can be grown successfully in sub-tropical areas. As this crop is highly perishable, areas chosen for the production of asparagus for export should have good transport facilities and any asparagus imported from countries outside Europe must be sent by air.

2. Production in Europe is discussed. With the exception of Germany and Switzerland, most countries are able to produce enough asparagus to meet domestic demand, thus imports are usually fairly low.

3. The main supplier of air-freighted asparagus to Europe is the USA, other suppliers include Mexico, Tunisia, Morocco, South Africa, Peru, Kenya and New Zealand. Production in the USA and Mexico is reviewed briefly.

4. Total imports into Western Europe ranged between 14 012 tonnes and 16 483 tonnes – see Table 1; Germany accounted for over 70% of total imports. The bulk of this trade is between European countries.

5. The largest importers of air-freight asparagus are the UK and Italy; imports into the UK average around 200 tonnes per annum, while imports into Italy, which averaged around 120 tonnes in the early 1970's, jumped to 315 tonnes in 1973. In Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Sweden imports from non-European suppliers (ie air-freighted asparagus) average under 10 tonnes per annum.

6. Most of the import trade in asparagus takes place between April and June as this is when European production is at a peak. Very little asparagus is imported in the rest of the year as, apart from the UK and Italy, demand at this time is minimal and imported asparagus is very expensive.

7. In continental Europe asparagus is widely sold through retail outlets, as well as being used in the catering industry. However, in the UK, even when domestic production of asparagus reaches a peak, it is sold mainly to the catering trade and luxury retail outlets. In all countries air-freighted asparagus goes mainly to the catering trade, with occasional supplies to luxury retail outlets.

8. Average cif prices are quoted for asparagus from various sources for the years 1969–1973. In general, import prices have tended to fluctuate and in most countries no trend is discernible. Air-freighted asparagus usually fetches two to three times the price paid for European-grown asparagus.

9. A wholesale price series is only available for the UK. Prices are lowest in May/June when domestic and European production is on the market and highest in the winter months, although prices do vary within given months according to source and quality.

10. An inter-country price comparison for air-freighted asparagus shows that prices are particularly low in Sweden and high in the UK, France and Germany.

11. Quality requirements are discussed. In the UK the preference is for green asparagus, whereas on the Continent the preference is for white. Asparagus should be harvested when the bud scales are tight and cooled quickly to remove the field heat. It should preferably be packed in bundles weighing 1 kg or ½ kg and air-freighted to Europe in fibreboard or wood pyramidal containers or in single layer fibreboard cartons.

12. All suppliers of asparagus to the enlarged EEC must comply with the EEC standard which is set out in Appendix B. This standard gives minimum requirements for external appearance for all classes of asparagus, eg shape, size, colour etc.

13. Barriers to trade in the form of tariffs and phyto-sanitary regulations are examined. The UK's and Denmark's tariffs will be in alignment with the EEC tariff of 16% by 1 January 1978. Switzerland and Sweden have specific tariffs – details of tariffs are given on page 27. Germany has regulations on permitted levels of chemical residues which apply to fresh produce, including asparagus.

14. The implications of tariff changes on the UK market following entry into the EEC are considered. It is concluded that EEC members will have improved prospects, and that Commonwealth countries will face greater competition than hitherto.

15. Prospects for a new supplier are considered. In general, there is lack of demand in Continental Europe for air-freighted asparagus because (a) few people are prepared to pay the high price for air-freighted asparagus and (b) tinned asparagus is a cheap and acceptable substitute. Although there is a relatively large market in Italy, the USA is so dominant that there appears to be little room for another supplier. The UK appears to be the only market which offers much hope for a prospective new supplier, in particular in the period September to December, but it must be emphasised that a high price will only be achieved on this market if the asparagus is of high quality.

RESUME ET CONCLUSIONS

Le marché des asperges dans certains pays choisis d'Europe Occidentale

1. L'asperge est un produit des régions tempérées, mais elle peut être cultivée avec succès dans des régions subtropicales. Etant donné que ce produit est extrêmement périssable, les régions choisies pour la production d'asperges pour l'exportation doivent disposer de bonnes possibilités de transport et les asperges importées de pays hors d'Europe doivent être expédiées par air.

2. La production en Europe est discutée. A l'exception de l'Allemagne et de la Suisse, la plupart des pays sont susceptibles de produire suffisamment d'asperges pour faire face à leur propre demande, c'est pourquoi, les importations sont habituellement assez faibles.

3. Les Etats-Unis sont les principaux fournisseurs d'asperges expédiées par air en Europe; les autres fournisseurs sont le Mexique, la Tunisie, le Maroc, L'Afrique du Sud, le Pérou, le Kenya et la Nouvelle-Zélande. La production aux Etats-Unis et au Mexique est analysée brièvement.

4. Les importations en Europe Occidentale se sont élevées à un total allant de 14.012 tonnes à 16.483 tonnes – voir tableau 1; l'Allemagne y a participé pour plus de 70% des importations totales. La plus grande partie de ce commerce se fait entre pays européens.

5. Les plus importants importateurs d'asperges expédiées par air sont le Royaume-Uni et l'Italie; les importations au Royaume-Uni sont en moyenne de près de 200 tonnes par an, alors que les importations en Italie, que étaient en moyenne de près de 120 tonnes au début de 1970, sont montées à 315 tonnes en 1973. En Belgique, au Danemark, aux Pays-Bas, en Suisse et en Suède, les importations provenant de fournisseurs non-européens (c'est-à-dire d'asperges expédiées par air) sont en moyenne inférieures à 10 tonnes par an.

6. La plus grande partie du commerce d'importation des asperges se situe entre avril et juin, étant donné que c'est l'époque où la production européenne est à son maximum. Très peu d'asperges sont importées pendant le reste de l'année car, à l'exception du Royaume-Uni et de l'Italie, la demande est minimale et les asperges importées sont très chères.

7. En Europe continentale, les asperges se vendent largement par l'intermédiaire des magasins de détail et elles sont utilisées également dans l'industrie alimentaire. Toutefois, dans le Royaume-Uni, même lorsque la production d'asperges du pays atteint un maximum, elles se vendent principalement pour le ravitaillement des restaurants et aux magasins de détail de luxe. Dans tous les pays, les asperges transportées par air sont destinées principalement aux restaurants avec des fournitures occasionnelles aux magasins de détail de luxe.

8. Les prix cif moyen sont cités pour les asperges à partir de diverses sources pour les années 1969–1973. En général, les prix d'importation avaient tendance à varier et dans la plupart des pays aucune tendance n'est discernable. Les asperges transportées par air atteignent habituellement deux à trois fois les prix payés pour les asperges cultivées en Europe.

9. On ne dispose d'une série de prix de gros que pour le Royaume-Uni. Les prix sont les plus bas en mai/juin, lorsque la production du pays et européenne est sur le marché et ils sont les plus élevés pendant les mois d'hiver, bien que les prix varient au cours de ces mois suivant la source et la qualité.

10. Une comparaison des prix entre pays pour les asperges expédiées par air révèle que les prix sont particulièrement bas en Suède et élevés dans le Royaume-Uni, en France et en Allemagne.

11. Les exigences de qualité sont discutées. Dans le Royaume-Uni, la préférence va aux asperges vertes, alors que sur le Continent, les asperges blanches sont préférées. Les asperges doivent être récoltées lorsque les écailles des bourgeons sont serrées et elles doivent être refroidies rapidement pour éliminer la chaleur du terrain. Elles doivent être de préférence rassemblées en bottes pesant 1 kg ou ½ kg et expédiées par air vers l'Europe dans des emballages pyramidaux en fibre ou en bois ou bien dans des cartons en fibre en une seule couche.

12. Tous les fournisseurs d'asperges à la CEE élargie doivent se conformer à la norme de la CEE qui est exposée dans l'Annexe B. Cette norme donne les exigences minimales pour l'aspect extérieur pour toutes les classes d'asperges, par exemple, forme, taille, couleur, etc.

13. Les obstacles au commerce sous la forme de tarifs douaniers et de règlements phyto-sanitaires sont examinés. Les tarifs douaniers du Royaume-Uni et du Danemark s'aligneront sur le tarif douanier de la CEE de 16% au 1er janvier 1978. La Suisse et la Suède ont des tarifs douaniers spéciaux — les détails des tarifs douaniers sont donnés page 27. L'Allemagne a des règlements sur les taux admissibles de résidus chimiques, que s'appliquent aux produits frais, y compris les asperges.

14. Les incidences des modifications des tarifs douaniers sur le marché du Royaume-Uni à la suite de son entrée dans la CEE sont examinées. On conclut que les membres de la CEE auront des perspectives améliorées et que les pays du Commonwealth feront face à une grande concurrence que jusqu'à présent.

15. Les perspectives pour un nouveau fournisseur sont examinées. En général, il y a absence de demande en Europe Continentale pour les asperges transportées par air pour les raisons suivantes: (a) peu de gens sont prêts à payer le prix fort pour des asperges transportées par air et (b) les asperges en conserves représentent un produit de remplacement bon marché et acceptable. Bien qu'il y ait un marché relativement important en Italie, les Etats-Unis prédominent à tel point qu'il semble y avoir peu de place pour un autre fournisseur. Le Royaume-Uni semble être le seul marché offrant beaucoup d'espoir à un nouveau fournisseur éventuel, en particulier dans la période de septembre à décembre, mais il faut souligner qu'un prix élevé ne sera obtenu sur ce marché que si les asperges sont de haute qualité.

RESUMEN Y CONCLUSIONES

El mercado de espárragos en determinados Países de Europa Occidental

1. El espárrago es una planta originaria de las regiones templadas, pero puede cultivarse con éxito en areas subtropicales. Como es un producto hortícola altamente perecedero, las areas elegidas para la producción deben contar con buenas facilidades de transporte, y tener en cuenta que las exportaciones a Europa desde países de otros continentes deben realizarse por vía aérea.

2. Se discute la producción en Europa. Con excepción de Alemania y Suiza, la mayoría de los países tienen una capacidad de producción suficiente para satisfacer la demanda interior, por lo que las importaciones son corrientemente bastante bajas.

3. El principal suministrador de espárragos, por vía aérea a Europa, son los Estados Unidos, incluyéndose como otros países suministradores Méjico, Tunícia, Marruecos, Sud Africa, Perú, Kenya y Nueva Zealanda. Se revisa, brevemente, la producción en los Estados Unidos y Méjico.

4. El total de las importaciones en Europa Occidental se sitúa entre 14.012 y 16.483 toneladas – ver Tabla 1; anotándose Alemania más del 70% del total de las importaciones. El volumen principal de este comercio se realiza entre los propios países europeos.

5. Los principales importadores de espárragos, por vía aérea, son el Reino Unido e Italia; las importaciones del Reino Unido suponen una cifra media anual de 200 toneladas, mientras que las importaciones et Italia, que suponían una cifra media anual de 120 toneladas a principios de los años 70, se elevaron, en 1973, a 315 toneladas. En Bélgica, Dinamarca, Holanda, Suiza, y Suecia, las importaciones procedentes de países no europeos, es decir las realizadas por vía aérea se elevan a una cifra media inferior a 10 toneladas anuales.

6. La mayor parte de las importaciones de espárragos tienen lugar entre Abril y Junio, época en que la producción europea se encuentra en su punto culminante. En el resto del año, las importaciones europeas, con excepción de las del Reino Unido e Italia, son muy pequeñas, ya que, en esta época, la demanda es mínima y los espárragos importados son muy caros.

7. En Europa continental los espárragos se vende en gran proporción a través de establecimientos de venta al por menor, siendo utilizados ampliamente también por el comercio de abastecimiento. Sin embargo, en el Reino Unido, incluso cuando la producción interna se encuentra en su punto culminante, los espárragos se venden principalmente al comercio de abastecimiento y a los establecimientos du lujo de venta al por menor. En todos los países, los espárragos importados por vía aérea se destinan principalmente al comercio de abastecimiento, con suministros ocasionales a los establecimientos de venta al por menor de lujo.

8. Se dan precios CIF medios de diversas fuentes suministradoras, en los años 1969–1973. En general, los precios de importación han tendido a fluctuar y en la mayoría de los países no se puede observar una tendencia clara. Los espárragos importados por vía aérea alcanzan dos o tres veces el precio de los espárragos cultivados en Europa.

9. Sólo se disponen de cifras de precios del comercio al por mayor del Reino Unido. Los precios más bajos son los de Mayo/Junio cuando la producción interio y europea está en el mercado, y los más altos en los meses de invierno, aunque los precios varian, dentro de un mes dado, de acuerdo con su procedencia y su calidad.

10. Comparando los precios de los espárragos importados por vía aérea, en los distintos países europeos, se comprueba que los precios son particularmente bajos en Suecia y altos en el Reino Unido, Francia y Alemania.

11. Se discuten las exigencias de calidad. En el Reino Unido las preferencias se dirigen hacia los espárragos verdes, mientras que en el Continente prefieren los espárragos blancos. Los espárragos deben recolectarse cuando las puntas están compactas, y deben refrigerarse rápidamente para remover el calor del campo. Es conveniente embalarlos en manojos de 1 ó ½ kg de peso y enviarlos por vía aérea a Europa en contenedores piramidales de tablero de fibra o madera, o en cajas de tablero de fibra de una sola capa.

12. Todos los suministradores de espárragos a la CEE ampliada deben cumplir las normas de la CEE, que se incluyen en el Apéndice B. Estas normas fijan las exigencias mínimas de aspecto externo para todas las clases de espárragos, tales como forma, tamaño, coloración etc.

13. Se examinan las barreras aduaneras comerciales en forma de tarifas y de regulaciones fitosanitarias. Las tarifas del Reino Unido y Dinamarca se alinearán con las tarifas de la CEE del 16% en el primero de Enero de 1978. Suiza y Suecia tienen tarifas específicas – se incluyen datos detallados de tarifas en la página 27. Alemania tiene regulaciones aplicables a los productos frescos, incluidos los espárragos, sobre los niveles permitidos de residuos de productos químicos.

14. Se consideran las implicaciones de los cambios de tarifas, en el mercado del Reino Unido, consiguientes a la entrada en la CEE. Se llega a la conclusión de que los países miembros de la CEE tendrán mejores perspectivas, y que los países de la Commonwealth se enfrentarán con una competencia mayor que hasta ahora.

15. Se consideran las perspectivas para nuevos suministradores. En general, en Europa continental existe escasa demanda para los espárragos importados por vía aérea porque (a) pocas personas están dispuestas a pagar su precio elevado y (b) los espárragos enlatados constituyen un sustitutivo barato y aceptable. Aunque existe un mercado relativamente importante en Italia, los Estados Unidos lo dominan de tal forma que existen pocas posibilidades para otros suministradores. El Reino Unido parece ser el único mercado que ofrece más posibilidades para nuevos suministradores, en particular en el período Septiembre–Diciembre, pero debe tenerse muy en cuenta que solamente se puede alcanzar un alto precio en este mercado sí los espárragos son de alta calidad.

Introduction

Asparagus is indigenous to temperate regions although it can be grown quite successfully in subtropical areas provided it is given a rest period, brought about by low temperatures or a period of no rain. If the plant does not have a rest period the shoots may become less vigorous and more spindly each year.

Besides their agricultural suitability, areas chosen for asparagus production, especially export production, should have good transport facilities as this vegetable damages easily. Because of the high perishability of this crop, supplies from non-European countries must be air-freighted in and this makes out-of-season asparagus an expensive commodity with a limited demand. As demand in Europe is so limited it is probably not economic for a country to start up asparagus production solely for export to Europe; ideally there should either also be a local demand for fresh and canned asparagus or a nearby export market. However, there may be a case for growing small quantities for export to Europe as an additional crop within an established export orientated horticultural industry.

Part 1

Production

IN EUROPE

Asparagus is grown out-of-doors during the summer in all the European countries surveyed in this report. The production season starts in late March/early April in the south of Europe and becomes progressively later as latitudes increase – for example in the UK the production period is mid-May to the end of June.

Of the countries whose markets are under consideration, France is the largest producer of asparagus, producing around 60 000 tonnes per annum. It is harvested in May/June but some is also forced under glass to supply the French domestic market in the early months of the year. France exports over 10 500 tonnes of asparagus each year, mainly to Germany but also to Switzerland. France is virtually self-sufficient in asparagus production and so imports only very small quantities.

Italian asparagus production is thought to average around 45 000 tonnes per annum. Production is concentrated in the north of the country, both green and white varieties being grown, although white asparagus is more dominant on this market (see Part III for further details of colour preferences). Despite this large domestic production, Italy has built up a relatively large import trade in air-freighted asparagus.

In Germany production averages only around 12 000 tonnes; this is not much for a country of her population and is the main reason why German imports are so much larger than for the other countries considered in this report.

Production in the Netherlands averages about 8 000 tonnes per annum and exports average around 3 500 tonnes per annum. Domestic production is adequate to meet home demand and little is imported into the Netherlands.

Production of asparagus in Belgium is of the order of 1 000 tonnes per annum, thus imports are relatively large, averaging over 500 tonnes per annum.

Production in the UK varies between 500 and 700 tonnes and, including imports, there is only around 1 000 tonnes available for domestic consumption. Therefore asparagus is very much a luxury item in the UK, even when domestic production is at a peak.

IN NON-EUROPEAN SUPPLYING COUNTRIES

The USA, Mexico, South Africa, Tunisia, Morocco, New Zealand, Peru and Kenya all supply air-freighted asparagus to Europe. Apart from the USA and Mexico, little has been published concerning production, production methods or future export plans of these overseas suppliers.

In the USA asparagus production is around 130 000 tonnes per annum, although it is declining slightly. Of this total approximately 70% is canned, the remainder is either consumed fresh or exported fresh. Over a third of the production of asparagus takes place in the state of California.

In Mexico production of asparagus rose rapidly between 1969 and 1973, increasing from over 2 000 tonnes to over 10 000 tonnes. Just under half the domestic production is canned, and between 2 000 and 3 000 tonnes of asparagus is exported fresh. Exports of canned asparagus have risen from around 550 tonnes in 1969 to over 3 500 tonnes in 1973.

There is no doubt that countries such as the USA, Mexico, South Africa and New Zealand could, if demand and prices were sufficently encouraging, export far more than at present because exports of fresh asparagus to Europe comprise only a small proportion of current production.

Part II

The market situation in Western Europe

GENERAL

Table 1 below shows imports of asparagus into the nine countries under review during the years 1969–1973 compared with an average for the years 1964–1968. Imports showed an upward trend during the earlier years, reaching a peak in 1970 of 16 483 tonnes: since then they have ranged between 15 500 and 16 000 tonnes per year.

Table 1

Imports of asparagus into selected Western European countries

tonnes

	1964/68 Average	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
Federal Republic of Germany	8 764	10 605	12 912	12 158	12 082	11 616
Belgium/Luxembourg	610	492	568	467	549	526
United Kingdom	. . .	(204)	259	334	387	386
Italy	16	38	113	129	135	317
Denmark	445	376	351	101	88	104
France	42	41	31	73	39	135
Netherlands	41	19	7	5	10	14
Switzerland	1 905	2 197	2 191	2 577	2 340	2 552
Sweden	28	40	51	23	13	29
Total	11 851	14 012	16 483	15 867	15 643	15 679

Notes: . . . not available ( ) TPI estimate

Source: derived from official trade returns

Germany is the major market and accounts for over 70% of total imports; the changes in the total are largely a reflection of the fluctuation in German imports. Switzerland is the second largest market, accounting for around 15% of total imports. Denmark and the Netherlands have experienced a decline in quantities imported whilst Italian imports have risen considerably. Over 95% of this trade is intra-European and imports fluctuate annually depending on the state of the harvest.

Table 2 shows that compared with the total import market, the market for air-freighted asparagus is very small.

With the exception of the UK and Italy, very little air-freighted asparagus is imported into Europe. In Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Denmark and Sweden, imports average under 10 tonnes per annum. In Germany and France the figure is slightly larger and in France imports of air-freighted asparagus account for over 25% of total imports. Virtually all Italian supplies are air-freighted in; this market has shown considerable expansion over the years. In the United Kingdom well over 50% of imports come by air.

Table 2

Imports of air-freighted[1] asparagus into selected Western European countries

tonnes

	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
Federal Republic of Germany	12	22	20	14	20
Belgium/Luxembourg	3	4	5	2	1
United Kingdom	(136)	182	194	266	225
Italy	38	113	128	135	315
Denmark	4	11	6	8	4
France	10	24	19	23	51
Netherlands	–	–	1	1	2
Switzerland	1	7	6	4	3
Sweden	6	2	–	–	3

Notes: [1] Assessed by aggregating supplies from non-European sources.
– nil or negligible ( ) USA exports

Source: Official Trade Returns and Nimexe Statistics (Analytical Tables. Vol. A. Chapters 1–24. Statistical Office of the European Communities).

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

Annual imports

Table 3 shows that imports have fluctuated over the period, rising to a peak of 12 912 tonnes in 1970. Since then they have shown a slight decline to 11 616 tonnes in 1973.

Table 3

Imports of asparagus into the Federal Republic of Germany

		1964/68 Average	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
Total	tonnes	8 764	10 605	12 912	12 158	12 082	11 616
	'000 DM	29 042	43 050	52 019	54 500	56 732	49 995
of which from:							
Belgium/Luxembourg	tonnes	226	...	8	14	40	31
	'000 DM	439	...	31	91	305	161
France	tonnes	3 650	5 893	7 840	8 165	8 251	7 954
	'000 DM	11 900	25 496	32 845	37 206	36 902	34 666
Italy	tonnes	4	60	97	72	32	23
	'000 DM	14	200	349	248	135	63
Netherlands	tonnes	4 500	4 179	4 593	3 409	3 305	3 084
	'000 DM	15 512	16 281	17 785	15 974	18 191	13 870
Spain	tonnes	63	...	17	...	8	44
	'000 DM	130	...	50	...	34	182
Hungary	tonnes	298	430	300	457	412	411
	'000 DM	653	906	762	825	1 032	788
Tunisia	tonnes	3	–	14	15	13	–
	'000 DM	20	–	54	52	50	–
Poland	tonnes	8	14	33	13	12	41
	'000 DM	25	37	87	34	42	120
Peru	tonnes	–	6	7	5	–	–
	'000 DM	4	43	43	33	–	–
Other countries	tonnes	12	23	3	8	9	28*
	'000 DM	46	87	13	37	41	145

Notes: – Nil or Negligible
... Not available
*of which South Africa 15 tonnes, value 90 000 DM

Source: *Der Aussenhandel* Statistisches Bundesamt

France and the Netherlands are the main suppliers and together accounted for over 90% of the total, 1969–73. Imports from France showed a rising trend up to 1972 but in 1973 they fell slightly to 7,954 tonnes, 68% of the total. Imports from the Netherlands showed a downward trend over the period falling to 3,084 tonnes in 1973, 27% of the total. Supplies from Hungary average around 400 tonnes per annum; other European suppliers include Belgium, Italy, Spain and Poland.

Imports of air-freighted supplies have ranged from 9 to 22 tonnes, with Tunisia the main supplier. Other less regular suppliers include Morocco, South Africa, Peru and the USA.

Seasonality of supply

Over 95% of German imports arrive between April and June, May being the peak month with over 50% of imports. Small quantities are received in March and July, imports are negligible in August but increase slightly in September/October and average around 5 tonnes a month up to Christmas. In January and February imports are very small. France sends supplies from March to July: Dutch supplies come on the market slightly later than French. Other European supplies also arrive between April and July. Supplies from countries outside Europe arrive either in the Autumn or in March.

Distribution

Asparagus is widely consumed in Germany during the European production season, being traded in the country's wholesale markets and sold through many retail outlets. Most air-freighted asparagus probably goes to the restaurant and hotel trade.

Prices

Average annual cif prices during the years 1969–1973 were as follows:–

Table 4

Average cif prices of asparagus imported into the Federal Republic of Germany

DM/kg

	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
All source	4.06	4.03	4.48	4.70	4.30
France	4.33	4.19	4.56	4.47	4.36
Netherlands	3.90	3.87	4.69	5.50	4.50
Hungary	2.11	2.54	1.81	2.50	1.92
Tunisia	–	3.86	3.47	3.85	–
Peru	7.13	6.14	6.60	–	–

– no price quoted.

Source: derived from official trade returns.

The all source price rose to a peak of 4.70 DM/kg in 1972 largely due to an increase in the value of Dutch supplies, but then fell in 1973 to 4.30 DM/kg. Prices for French asparagus fluctuated between 4.19 DM/kg and 4.56 DM/kg, but those for Dutch asparagus rose greatly in 1971 and again in 1972 and in the last three years Dutch asparagus fetched more at import level than French. Prices for Hungarian asparagus are much lower than for other suppliers, which is probably a reflection of the poorer quality of this asparagus, and show no particular trend. Asparagus from Tunisia, although air-freighted in, did not fetch a high price; this might again reflect its quality. Asparagus from places as far away as Peru and South Africa averages around 6.00 DM/kg; although a large proportion of the differential can be accounted for by the costs of air-freight, the asparagus is also probably of high quality.

BELGIUM/LUXEMBOURG

Annual imports

As can be seen from Table 5 imports showed no distinct trend between 1969 and 1973, fluctuating between a low of 467 and a high of 568 tonnes.

This table shows that in recent years France has taken over from the Netherlands as the leading supplier. Imports from France almost doubled between 1969 and

Table 5

Imports of asparagus into Belgium/Luxembourg

		1964/68 Average	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
Total	tonnes	610	492	568	467	549	526
	'000 B.Fr	16 627	14 499	22 921	16 796	24 804	26 083
of which from:–							
France	tonnes	49	162	304	291	335	310
	'000 B.Fr	2 541	6 016	12 330	12 114	16 986	18 684
Netherlands	tonnes	533	323	258	...	212	...
	'000 B.Fr	13 287	7 965	9 934	...	7 639	...
Peru	tonnes	–	...	2	2	...	...
	'000 B.Fr	–	...	267	261	...	...
Other Countries	tonnes	27	7	4	174	2	216
	'000 B.Fr	799	518	390	4 421	179	7 399

Notes: – Nil or Negligible
... Not available

Source: *Commerce Extérieur.* L'Institute National de Statistique.

1970 and since then have averaged around 300 tonnes per annum. Although no figures are given for the Netherlands in the Official Trade Returns in 1971 and 1973, according to the Nimexe statistics almost all imports described as coming from 'other countries' did in fact come from the Netherlands. Her supplies have shown a downward trend over the years, averaging just over 200 tonnes in 1972/73.

Peru, Tunisia, Morocco and New Zealand have all sent air-freighted asparagus to Belgium but total supplies from these sources average under 5 tonnes per annum and none of these suppliers has yet built up a regular air-freight trade.

Seasonality of supply

Asparagus imports reach a peak in May and June, with over 90% of total imports arriving in the three months April to June. Between July and February imports are under 10 tonnes a month. The Netherlands supplies this market mainly in May and June whereas the majority of French exports arrive between March and the end of June; very small quantities are also imported from France in October and November.

Distribution

Asparagus is widely consumed domestically during the European production season and both domestic and imported supplies are marketed on the country's wholesale markets. The very limited out-of-season supplies are sold mainly to the restaurant trade.

Prices

Average annual cif prices for imported asparagus during the years 1969–1973 were as follows:

Table 6

Average cif prices of asparagus imported into Belgium/Luxembourg

B.Fr/kg

	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
All source	29.47	40.35	35.97	45.18	49.59
France	37.14	40.56	41.53	50.70	60.27
Netherlands	24.66	38.50	–	36.03	–
Peru	–	133.50	130.50	–	–

– no price quoted

Source: derived from official trade returns

The all source price has, apart from 1971, shown a rising trend, reaching 49.59 Fr/kg in 1973. Prices for French asparagus have shown a steady upward trend and fetch considerably more than Dutch asparagus. For the two years that prices were available from Peru, it can be seen they were treble the all source price and it is not surprising that there is only a very small demand for this air-freighted asparagus.

UNITED KINGDOM

Annual imports

Prior to 1970 asparagus was not shown separately in the UK Trade Returns so Table 7 shows imports from 1970 onwards. The provisional 1974 figure is 337 tonnes and imports appear to have stabilised at around the level of 330–390 tonnes. Considering the low level of domestic production and the size of population, the UK imports surprisingly low amounts of asparagus. This bears out the fact that asparagus is considered very much a 'luxury' item in the UK and is not bought by most housewives. However, unlike most other European countries, the 'luxury image' of asparagus has worked to the advantage of overseas suppliers and the UK is a large market for air-freighted asparagus.

Table 7

Imports of asparagus into the United Kingdom

		1970	1971	1972	1973
16 April – 30 June	tonnes	132	203	185	229
	£'000	80	122	125	183
1 July – 15 April	tonnes	127	131	202	157
	£'000	109	120	179	228
Total	tonnes	259	334	387	386
	£'000	189	242	304	411
of which from:					
France	tonnes	53	107	99	55
	£'000	28	48	52	32
Italy	tonnes	21	32	16	80
	£'000	8	18	9	44
Hungary	tonnes	–	–	6	26
	£'000	–	–	6	26
Republic of South Africa	tonnes	–	2	13	27
	£'000	–	3	15	31
Tunisia	tonnes	3	6	7	8
	£'000	2	5	6	9
USA	tonnes	141	143	169	141
	£'000	110	126	154	220
Kenya	tonnes	5	6	5	8
	£'000	4	5	3	6
New Zealand	tonnes	7	6	6	5
	£'000	11	8	6	8
Mexico	tonnes	15	22	32	15
	£'000	16	22	28	18
Australia	tonnes	1	5	2	3
	£'000	1	5	2	2
Canada	tonnes	6	–	18	–
	£'000	4	–	12	–
Cyprus	tonnes	2	3	9	15
	£'000	1	2	6	8
Other Countries	tonnes	5	2	5	3
	£'000	4	–	5	7

– nil or negligible

Source: *The Trade of the United Kingdom.* H.M. Customs and Excise.

The USA is the main supplier to this market and, with the exception of 1972 when the figure rose to 169 tonnes, sends around 140 tonnes per annum. All these supplies are air-freighted. France is the next largest supplier, sending between 50 and 110 tonnes per annum over the period. Italy and Hungary are

other European suppliers; imports from Italy were particularly high in 1973, reaching 80 tonnes. Non-European suppliers account for an important part of the UK's market and in 1972 and 1973 they accounted for over 50% of total imports. The United Kingdom is, apart from Italy, the largest European importer of air-freighted asparagus, and besides the USA supplies have been received from Mexico, South Africa, Tunisia, Kenya, New Zealand and Cyprus. The market for air-freighted asparagus is not dynamic and is dominated by the USA, but there is plenty of opportunity for new suppliers to oust some of the smaller suppliers.

Seasonality of supply

Most imports arrive from March to June, often with a peak in March. Although UK production is on the market from mid-May to the end of June, European grown asparagus can still compete successfully as prices are high on the domestic market. Most European produce is imported between mid-April and the end of June. Some non-European suppliers, notably the USA, also send at this time of year, but most air-freighted supplies arrive between the end of July and mid-April, and particularly between January and April. Supplies are short from September to December. Table 9 gives a good indication of the seasonality of supplying countries.

Distribution

Asparagus, whether home produced or imported, is marketed through city wholesale firms, but the bulk of the air-freighted produce is marketed in the New Covent Garden Market. Some asparagus from the USA/Mexico is bought on a firm basis, the price being fixed daily, but other asparagus is sold on a consignment/commission basis. As fresh asparagus is considered a luxury item in the United Kingdom, even when domestic production is at a peak, the main outlets are luxury hotels, restaurants and high class fruiterers.

Prices

Average annual cif prices for asparagus during the years 1970–1973 were as follows:

Table 8

Average cif prices of asparagus imported into the United Kingdom

p/kg

	1970	1971	1972	1973
All source 16 April – 30 June	61	60	67	80
1 July – 15 April	86	92	89	145
France	53	45	53	58
Italy	38	56	57	55
USA	78	88	91	156
Mexico	107	100	86	118
New Zealand	154	127	108	154

Source: derived from official trade returns

In the UK the winter or out-of-season price is considerably higher than the in-season price. Both series showed little movement up to 1973 but in that year prices rose considerably, probably due to the poor performance of Sterling in the world market. Asparagus from European countries fetches under 60p/kg and has shown little increase, whereas air-freighted asparagus fetches upwards of 80p/kg and as much as over 150p/kg at times. Asparagus from New Zealand fetches the top price in most years as New Zealand suppliers stop sending when the market falls below a predetermined level which is necessarily high to cover the high air-freight charges.

Table 9 shows the average monthly wholesale price for asparagus. Prices are lowest April to June when first European supplies and then domestic production

Table 9

Monthly average wholesale prices at selected markets in England and Wales

p/lb

		J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Annual Range Min.	Annual Range Max.
Kenya	1972	66(a)	–	45	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	73½	45	73½
	1973	63½	56½(a)	42½(b)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	100(a)	52½	100
	1974	69	60(b)	50(a)	–	–	–	–	–	–	63½	65(b)	50(a)	50	69
USA	1972	70(a)	70	54½	42½	40½	42	–	55	59	–	54	–	40½	70
	1973	90(b)	78	66	55½	49½	40(a)	–	–	73½	–	–	–	40	90
	1974	100(b)	89	72	59½	56	–	65(a)	–	81½	67½	60(b)	60(b)	56	100
France	1972	–	–	–	29½	30½	32	28	–	–	–	–	–	28	32
	1973	–	–	–	60(a)	36½	27½	–	–	–	–	–	–	27½	60
	1974	–	–	–	42½(a)	31(b)	41½	–	–	–	–	–	–	31	42½
Hungary	1972	–	–	–	25(a)	25	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	25	
	1973	–	–	–	–	29½	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	29½	
	1974	–	–	–	39(b)	32	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	32	39
Italy	1972	–	–	–	27(a)	25(b)	15½	–	–	–	–	–	–	15½	27
	1973	–	–	–	–	29(a)	27(b)	–	–	–	–	–	–	27	29
	1974	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	40	50
Tunisia	1972	–	–	–	40(b)	40(a)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	35	50
	1973	–	–	–	–	39	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	45	53
	1974	–	–	50(a)	40(a)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	32	59½
Cyprus	1972	–	–	–	–	35(a)	35(a)	–	–	–	–	–	50(a)	35	50
	1973	–	–	–	53	45	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	45	53
	1974	–	–	59½(b)	48½	32(a)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	32	59½
UK	1972	–	–	–	–	36(a)	42	46(a)	–	–	–	–	–	36	46
	1973	–	–	–	–	45½	39½	45(a)	–	–	–	–	–	39½	45½
	1974	–	–	–	–	56	42½	57(a)	–	–	–	–	–	42½	57
Mexico	1972	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	65(b)	54	51(a)	–	51	65
	1973	70½(b)	–	66½	–	–	–	–	–	–	50	59½	–	50	70½
	1974	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
South Africa	1972	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	54(b)	58½	62½(a)	–	54	62½
	1973	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	60(a)	51½	74	–	51½	74
	1974	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	80(a)	80	
New Zealand	1972	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	67½(b)	69(a)	–	67½	69
	1973	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	60(b)	90	–	60	90
	1974	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
Australia	1972	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	65(b)	65	
	1973	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	66(a)	–	66	
	1974	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	

Notes: – no price quoted.
(a) Price quoted one week in month. (b) Price quoted twice in a month.

Source: Fruit Intelligence.

is on the market. Domestically grown asparagus, even when production is at a peak, fetches a higher price than Continental supplies, illustrating the premium paid for the fresher domestic product. As with the import prices, wholesale prices have shown an upward trend over the years but this is a reflection of increased marketing costs rather than of increased demand. Wholesale prices are generally higher in the winter months but vary within given months according to source, New Zealand asparagus fetching top prices. This range in prices according to source is attributed to quality differences (asparagus deteriorates rapidly at high temperatures or in unsuitable packages) and, in addition, premiums are paid for asparagus supplied under well known brand marks which have a long established reputation among buyers.

In the UK the preference is for green asparagus whereas on the Continent white asparagus is preferred.

ITALY

Annual Imports

As can be seen from Table 10, imports have shown a rapid growth over the period, rising to 317 tonnes in 1973. However, this latter figure appears to be exceptional as the provisional 1974 import figure is 194 tonnes. Nevertheless, the Italian market has still shown the most substantial growth rate of all the countries studied.

Table 10

Imports of asparagus into Italy

		1964/68 Average	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
Total	tonnes	16.4	37.8	112.6	128.8	135.2	316.9
	'000 Lire	15 917	53 468	119 431	105 795	107 466	360 979
of which from:–							
USA	tonnes	11.0	37.2	110.1	124.0	126.9	314.6
	'000 Lire	12 704	53 071	113 996	99 561	99 332	358 937
Tunisia	tonnes	0.8	0.4	–	0.1	–	. . .
	'000 Lire	300	244	–	58	–	. . .
New Zealand	tonnes	–	–	2.5	3.8	3.9	. . .
	'000 Lire	–	–	5 435	5 724	5 887	. . .
Other Countries	tonnes	4.6	0.2	–	0.9	4.4	1.3
	'000 Lire	2 913	173	–	452	2 247	2 042

Notes: – nil or negligible . . . not available

Source: *Comercio Con L'Estero.* Instituto Centrale Di Statistica

The growth of the Italian market is entirely due to increased imports of air-freighted asparagus; such a growth is remarkable as Italy is not usually the main market for such commodities. The USA is the dominant supplier and her supplies set the pattern for the total. New Zealand and other non-European countries also send very small amounts.

Seasonality of supply

Most asparagus arrives in Italy between February and June and there is usually a peak in March/April. Small quantities are occasionally imported in October/November. The import pattern for asparagus from the USA is virtually synonymous with the overall import pattern.

Distribution

Imported air-freighted asparagus arrives at Milan and is sold on the wholesale market, mainly to luxury hotels and restaurants.

Prices

Average annual cif prices for imported asparagus during the years 1969–1973 were as follows:

Table 11

Average cif prices of asparagus imported into Italy

Lire/Kg

	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
All sources	1 414	1 061	818	795	1 143
USA	1 427	1 035	803	783	1 141

Source: derived from official trade returns

All source prices fell steadily during the first four years of the period – this is often the case with a new import which is sent in increasing quantities. In 1973 total imports showed a large rise but prices increased markedly also – possibly due to the weakness of the Lira. Prices paid for asparagus from the USA showed an identical trend to that of the all source price.

DENMARK

Annual imports

Table 12 shows that over the years imports have fluctuated greatly but have tended to show a downward trend.

Table 12

Imports of asparagus into Denmark

		1964/68 Average	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
1 May – 15 May	tonnes	...	...	...	18.5	33.2	45.8
	'000 Kr	...	...	...	75	132	222
16 May – 30 June	tonnes	...	...	...	78.4	15.9	52.5
	'000 Kr	...	...	...	392	55	239
1 July – 30 April	tonnes	...	...	...	4.4	38.7	5.5
	'000 Kr	...	...	...	50	207	72
Total	tonnes	445.1	375.8	350.9	101.3	87.8	103.8
	'000 Kr	179.9	1 615	1 280	517	394	533
of which from:–							
Netherlands	tonnes	393.1	184.6	168.4	45.0	5.9	41.0
	'000 Kr	1 585	852	517	251	16	189
Hungary	tonnes	42.1	177.1	171.5	44.2	71.9	50.0
	'000 Kr	164	678	683	176	285	219
Italy	tonnes	1.2	8.9	–	6.3	1.2	7.4
	'000 Kr	7	39	–	27	8	49
Tunisia	tonnes	0.7	0.4	2.0	2.3	1.3	0.7
	'000 Kr	4	7	18	29	16	10
USA	tonnes	0.2	2.6	8.6	3.4	4.9	3.6
	'000 Kr	–	24	57	33	52	51
Other Countries	tonnes	7.8	2.2	0.4	0.1	2.6	1.1
	'000 Kr	39	15	5	1	17	15

Notes: – Nil or Negligible ... Not available

Source: *Foreign Trade of Denmark.* Det Statistiske Departement

Imports were fairly high prior to 1971 but since then they have averaged only around 100 tonnes. The Netherlands and Hungary are the main suppliers to Denmark and between them account for over 90% of total imports. Italy is a minor European supplier.

Tunisia and the USA are the main suppliers of air-freighted asparagus and both countries appear to have built up a regular, if somewhat fluctuating, trade.

Seasonality of supply

Most imports arrive between the beginning of May and the end of June; imports arriving during the first two weeks in May are showing an increase. Little asparagus arrives between the end of July and mid-April; a high 1972 figure for this period was caused by large imports from Hungary in late April. European supplies arrive between May and July whereas most air-freighted supplies arrive between January and May.

Prices

Average annual cif prices for the years 1969–1973 are shown in Table 13.

Table 13

Average cif prices of asparagus imported into Denmark

Kr/Kg

	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
1 May – 15 May	–	–	4.05	3.98	4.85
16 May – 30 June	–	–	5.00	3.46	4.55
1 July – 30 April	–	–	11.36	5.35	13.09
Netherlands	4.62	3.07	5.58	2.71	4.61
Hungary	3.83	3.98	3.98	3.96	4.38
Tunisia	17.50	9.00	12.61	12.31	14.29
USA	9.23	6.63	9.71	10.61	14.12

– No price quoted

Source: derived from official trade returns

This table clearly shows that high prices are paid for air-freighted asparagus. Prices in May and June fluctuate, not showing any particular trend, while prices for the rest of the year are more than double. (The low figure for 1972 was caused by large imports from Hungary in April and is atypical).

Prices for asparagus from the Netherlands showed considerable fluctuation, ranging between 2.71 and 5.58 Kr/kg. Apart from 1973, when the price rose, asparagus from Hungary has fetched a fairly constant price of just under 4.00 Kr/kg. Prices for Tunisian asparagus have fluctuated but in general are higher than prices for asparagus from the USA. Air-freighted asparagus fetches on average over 10 Kr/kg in Denmark.

FRANCE

Annual Imports

Imports into France have fluctuated over the period and no particular trend is evident. France is virtually self-sufficient in asparagus production and as can be seen from Table 14 imports are at a low level.

Unfortunately the Trade Returns do not give a detailed breakdown by supplying country, but the Nimexe Statistics do give such a breakdown. They show that Tunisia has been a regular supplier throughout the 5 years, averaging 14 tonnes per annum. Imports from Italy and other European suppliers fluctuate greatly and in 1973 there was an influx of supplies from Spain, Belgium and Italy.

Table 14

Imports of asparagus into France

		1964/68 Average	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
Total	tonnes	42	41	31	73	39	135
	'000 Fr	103	133	156	221	257	764
of which from:–							
Tunisia	tonnes	16	...	24	14	...	...
	'000 Fr	41	...	122	64	...	...
Italy	tonnes	...	...	...	50	...	...
	'000 Fr	...	...	...	81	...	...
Morocco	tonnes	...	...	...	...	14	20
	'000 Fr	...	...	...	...	130	319
Other Countries	tonnes	26	41	7	9	25	115
	'000 Fr	62	133	34	76	127	445

... not available

Sources: *Commerce Extérieur.* Direction Générale des Douanes et Droits Indirects

Imports of air-freighted asparagus varied between 10 and 24 tonnes, 1969–1972, but rose to 51 tonnes in 1973. Tunisia, Morocco latterly, and the USA all send air-freighted asparagus to France.

Seasonality of supply

Unfortunately no statistical breakdown of imports by month is available but it is thought that most imports arrive before April, prior to domestic production coming on to the market.

Distribution

France is the premier asparagus producing country in Europe and during the domestic season the vegetable is relatively cheap and widely consumed. Both these domestic supplies and the small quantities of imported asparagus are sold in the wholesale markets, the air-freighted asparagus going largely to the restaurant trade.

Prices

As the Trade Returns are not very detailed only a restricted price analysis can be given and this is shown in Table 15.

Table 15

Average cif prices of asparagus imported into France

Fr/kg

	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
All source	3.24	5.03	3.03	6.59	5.66
Tunisia	–	5.08	4.57	–	–
Morocco				9.29	15.95

– no price quoted

Source: derived from official trade returns

All source prices have shown considerable fluctuation, ranging from 3.03 Fr/kg to 6.59 Fr/kg.

NETHERLANDS

Annual imports

Demand is met almost wholly by domestic production and, as Table 16 shows, imports are very low, averaging over 11 tonnes per annum, 1969–1973.

Table 16

Imports of asparagus into the Netherlands

		1964/68 Average	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
Total	tonnes	41	19	7	5	10	14
	'000 Gld	94	36	36	21	39	62
of which from:							
Belgium/Luxembourg	tonnes	37	8	4	1	2	4
	'000 Gld	81	14	24	5	8	14
France	tonnes	1	10	...	3	5	8
	'000 Gld	4	16	...	12	27	32
Other Countries	tonnes	3	1	3	1	3	2
	'000 Gld	9	6	12	4	4	16

... Not available

Source: *Maandstatistiek van de Invoer* Central Bureau Voor de Statistiek

Belgium and France are the only named suppliers but the Nimexe Statistics show that very small supplies of air-freighted asparagus have been received from Tunisia and South Africa in recent years.

Seasonality of supply

Most imports arrive between April and July: the peak month for imports is either May or June, depending on the earliness or otherwise of the European season.

Distribution

Domestically produced and most imported asparagus is sold on the auction markets.

Prices

Unfortunately, as can be seen from Table 17, the only prices shown in the Official Trade Returns are for European suppliers.

Table 17

Average cif prices of asparagus imported into the Netherlands

Gld/kg

	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
All sources	1.89	5.14	4.20	3.90	4.42
Belgium/Luxembourg	1.75	6.00	5.00	4.00	3.50
France	1.60	–	4.00	5.40	4.00

– no price quoted

Source: derived from official trade returns

The import price recorded for 1969 was very low compared with preceding and succeeding years. In at least two other countries, Switzerland and Belgium, the 1969 price was low, suggesting unusually good supply in that year. Prices were high in 1970 but since then have fluctuated at a lower level.

SWITZERLAND

Annual imports

Switzerland is the second largest importer of asparagus of the countries under consideration. Table 18 shows that annual imports ranged between 2 191 and 2 577 tonnes, 1969–1973, with a small underlying upward trend.

Table 18

Imports of asparagus into Switzerland

		1964/68 Average	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
Total	tonnes	1 905	2 197	2 191	2 577	2 340	2 552
	'000 Fr.	6 304	8 513	9 108	9 874	11 459	12 322
of which from:							
France	tonnes	1 663	1 932	1 959	2 329	2 095	2 370
	'000 Fr.	5 755	7 822	8 423	9 214	10 695	11 626
Italy	tonnes	181	204	201	224	220	169
	'000 Fr.	358	497	535	551	631	633
Spain	tonnes	9	10	2	–	–	–
	'000 Fr.	12	12	17	–	–	–
Hungary	tonnes	44	45	22	15	19	9
	'000 Fr.	150	144	89	60	97	36
Tunisia	tonnes	3	–	4	4	4	–
	'000 Fr.	10	–	22	18	13	–
United States	tonnes	–	1	3	–	–	3
	'000 Fr.	–	15	21	–	–	24
Other Countries	tonnes	5	5	–	5	2	1
	'000 Fr.	19	23	1	31	23	3

– nil or negligible

Source: *Statistique de la Suisse* Bureau Federal de Statistique

France is the dominant supplier, accounting for an average of 90% of total imports over the last five years; thus her imports set the pattern for the aggregate. Italy is a minor supplier, averaging between 7 and 9% of the total. Hungary sends very small supplies to Switzerland.

Tunisia and the USA send air-freighted asparagus but so far they have not established a regular pattern of supply. Thus the air-freight trade in Switzerland is small and not well-established.

Seasonality of supply

As in most other countries, virtually all imports arrive between April and June, with May the peak month. Imports during the rest of the year are negligible although small quantities arrive between January and March. France sends between February and July, with a peak in May, and Hungarian supplies also come chiefly in May. Tunisian supplies arrive around April and the USA's around March.

Distribution

In the spring and summer European-grown asparagus is received overland and is sold in the main urban centres, either out of the railway wagons to retailers or secondary wholesalers, or in the wholesale markets. The main outlets for air-freighted out-of-season asparagus are probably luxury hotels and restaurants.

Prices

Average annual cif prices for imported asparagus during the years 1969–1973 were as follows:

Table 19

Average cif prices of asparagus imported into Switzerland

Fr/kg

	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
All source	3.87	4.16	3.83	4.90	4.83
France	4.05	4.30	3.96	5.10	4.91
Italy	2.44	2.66	2.46	2.87	3.75
Tunisia	–	5.69	4.06	3.61	–
USA	17.01	7.61	–	–	6.85

– no price quoted

Source: derived from official trade returns

All source prices fluctuated showing a large rise between 1971 and 1972, but no definite trend can be seen. French asparagus always fetches a much higher price than Italian asparagus, perhaps reflecting quality differences. The price paid for Tunisian asparagus fell, markedly between 1970 and 1972, when it fetched a lower price than the French asparagus. Prices for asparagus from the USA have also declined – the strength of the Swiss currency may have had an effect – although they were still above those of all the other suppliers in 1973. It appears that there is not a particularly high premium attached to air-freighted asparagus in Switzerland.

SWEDEN

Annual Imports

As can be seen from Table 20 imports have fluctuated over the years but are usually under 50 tonnes per annum.

Table 20

Imports of asparagus into Sweden

		1964/68 Average	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
1 May – 30 June	tonnes	22	32	46	20	6	25
	'000 Kr	84	121	166	70	37	111
1 July – 30 April	tonnes	6	8	5	3	7	4
	'000 Kr	39	57	42	21	50	43
Total	tonnes	28	40	51	23	13	29
of which from:	'000 Kr	123	178	208	91	87	154
France	tonnes	6	3	–	4	3	1
	'000 Kr	34	17	–	23	27	17
Hungary	tonnes	17	29	42	13	–	19
	'000 Kr	53	105	140	33	–	74
Poland	tonnes	–	–	–	2	2	3
	'000 Kr	–	–	–	10	12	17
USA	tonnes	–	6	2	–	–	2
	'000 Kr	3	35	16	–	–	14
Other Countries	tonnes	5	2	7	4	8	4
	'000 Kr	33	21	52	25	48	32

– nil or negligible

Source: *Sveriges Inforsel Och Utforsel.* Statistiska Centralbyran.

Apart from 1972, Hungary was the main supplier to this market, accounting for between 57% and 82% of the total, 1969/73. France and Poland also send small quantities to Sweden. The USA is again the main supplier of air-freighted asparagus – but this trade is not yet well-established.

Seasonality of supply

Most asparagus is imported in May and June with European countries the main suppliers. Supplies from the USA usually arrive between January and the beginning of May.

Prices

Table 21 shows the average cif price over the last five years.

Table 21

Average cif prices of asparagus imported into Sweden

Kr/kg

	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
1 May – 30 June	3.78	3.61	3.50	6.17	4.44
1 July – 30 April	7.13	8.40	7.00	7.14	10.75
Hungary	3.62	3.33	2.54	–	3.89
France	5.67	–	5.75	9.00	17.00
USA	5.83	8.00	–	–	7.00

– no price quoted

Source: derived from official trade returns

Apart from 1972, when the prices were fairly close, there is a clear differential between the in-season and out-of-season price – the out-of-season price usually being twice as high. Prices in the season were particularly high in 1972 and in the out-of-season high in 1973. Hungarian asparagus fetches low prices, whereas French asparagus is very highly priced, reflecting its superior quality. Asparagus from the USA does not fetch a high price, presumably because this asparagus is green and the Swedes prefer white.

INTER-COUNTRY COMPARISON OF CIF IMPORT PRICES FOR AIR-FREIGHTED ASPARAGUS

So far all the price data presented in this report for importing countries have, for reasons given in the note on page vi, been in national currencies. This has, of course, precluded any inter-country price comparisons but as exporters no doubt wish to supply the more remunerative markets, if such exist, Table 22 has been prepared to show the 1973 import price for the major supplier of air-freighted asparagus to each of the countries in question, using a standardised unit. The standardised price unit used is Sterling – pence per kilogramme. Unfortunately neither Belgium nor the Netherlands give sufficient detail in their Trade Returns for these markets to be included in such a comparison, and most other countries only show one or two suppliers of air-freighted asparagus so the scope of the analysis is somewhat limited.

It should be borne in mind that average import prices may not in fact be very good indicators of price level for goods imported on consignment if adjustments, following final sale, to importers' initial estimates are not fully provided for nor taken into account in the final rendering of the Trade Returns. However, in the absence of comprehensive wholesale price data, average import prices are the best data available.

Air-freighted asparagus is necessarily a high value commodity as air-freight costs comprise a large proportion of the total, but there are considerable differences between prices paid on the various markets for asparagus from the same source. High prices are paid on both the French and German markets – the price in Germany is to some extent a reflection of the high freight costs, but the price in France is probably more a reflection of the high quality of imported asparagus. Among those countries importing asparagus from the USA by far the highest price

is received in the United Kingdom. On this market asparagus is highly priced all year round and it is regarded as a "luxury" item for which people are prepared to pay top prices. The lowest price for asparagus from the USA was made in Sweden – only 66p/kg; possibly because the Swedes prefer a white asparagus and not the green as supplied by the USA. Although the Italian price for 1973 is somewhat higher than in the two previous years the Italian market is still the second lowest priced of those considered.

Table 22

Cif import prices for various European countries in 1973 on a standardised basis

p/kg

	USA
Federal Republic of Germany	137 (South Africa)
United Kingdom	156
Italy	80
Denmark	96
France	146 (Morocco)
Switzerland	88
Sweden	66

Source: derived from official trade returns

Part III

Quality requirements

VARIETIES

Although varietal differences cannot be clearly defined, asparagus varieties can be divided into two general types based on the colour of the spears. Mary Washington, Martha Washington, Argenteuil, Giant French and Reading Giant are varieties of asparagus whose spears become dark green on exposure to sunlight; Connover's Colossal, Mammouth White and White German asparagus are examples of types which produce light green or whitish spears above ground. These light coloured varieties should not be mistaken for white asparagus which can be produced from either the light green or dark green types through blanching, a process which involves ridging the soil over the crowns. In the UK the preference is for green asparagus; white asparagus is produced much more extensively and is preferred on the Continent. Nevertheless, in the absence of white asparagus the green type is accepted by some European markets; Italy, Switzerland and Sweden all import green asparagus from the USA. There also exist preferences in relation to the shape of the tip; varieties selected and grown in Germany, for example, have retained the characteristic rounded tip whereas the French have selected types with more pointed tips to the spear.

HARVESTING

Asparagus should be harvested when the bud scales are compact; the spears should be cut cleanly and vertically to the axis of the stalk although slight bevelling is permitted to improve the appearance of the final pack. There is a loss in tenderness and flavour after asparagus has been harvested; this is accelerated at high temperatures. Asparagus must therefore be moved from the field, bunched, packed and placed in a cool atmosphere as soon as possible after it is cut. The spears should be protected from the sun as much as possible if they are harvested during very warm weather.

STORAGE

Fresh asparagus may be held for a limited period in store. Following cutting it may be advantageous to pre-cool the spears as deterioration occurs more rapidly at temperatures above 40°F (4.4°C).Asparagus may be stored at a temperature of 36°F (2.2°C) for up to three weeks. Where storage is for ten days or less, a temperature of 32°F (0°C) can be recommended; it is reported by some sources that if asparagus is held for longer at this temperature it can be subject to chilling injury. A high relative humidity should be maintained in store to prevent excessive moisture loss.

GRADING

The EEC standard for asparagus is given in Appendix B; it was adopted in the United Kingdom on February 1, 1974. All countries exporting to EEC countries must adhere to this standard. Within the standard drawn up the minimum requirements for all classes of asparagus must be: whole, fresh in appearance and smell, sound, free from pest damage, practically unbruised, clean and free from excessive external moisture. The condition of the produce must be such that it can withstand handling and transport and meet market requirements at its destination. The asparagus must not have been soaked subsequent to harvest to preserve or restore freshness. Pre-cooling is however permitted.

Additional requirements for quality class selection relate to such factors as shape, size, colour etc.

PACKING

Although the wholesale markets prefer bundles, shoots may be marketed either in bundles or loose and in a variety of containers. Bundled asparagus is packed to weights of 1 kg or 500 gm. The produce must be adequately protected to preserve its freshness, to prevent damage and to keep it clean.

The bundles are often wrapped in parchment paper or cellophane with only the tips and base showing; this both improves the appearance of the asparagus and provides some protection from mechanical injury for the spears during transit. The sleeves form an ideal medium for displaying trade marks and brand names.

Californian exporters use a pyramidal container for air-freighting asparagus to Europe: (16 lb capacity), the shape of which suits the taper of asparagus when packed upright. A similar container has been developed by Mexico. Until recently only wood was used; however, an increasing quantity of supplies are being received in Europe packed in fibreboard pyramidal containers.

Other exporting countries, eg South Africa, Kenya and New Zealand use single layer fibreboard cartons. The bundles, individually wrapped, may be placed crown to tail along the length of the container or in the case of some suppliers, such as New Zealand, the shoots are packed loose in fibreboard pre-packs, 5 or 6 pre-packs of 500 gm per single layer carton. Overheating can occur where asparagus is too densely packed and where ventilation is restricted. French asparagus is packed loose in 5 kg wooden boxes with cellophane covers; as far as the UK is concerned, this type of pack is more suitable for the hotel and restaurant trade.

Part IV

Tariffs and phyto-sanitary regulations

IMPORT TARIFFS

Tariffs charged on asparagus imported into the countries surveyed in this report were as follows on 1st January 1975:

	Period	*General rate*	*Exceptions*
EEC (Original Six)	All year	16% *ad valorem*	Associated Territories – Free. Morocco –Free within a quota allowance.
UK	16 April–30 June	6.4% + £3.3069 per 100 kg	M–£3.3069 per 100 kg C_1 whichever is the greater of 6.8% or 0.80UA per 100 kg. C_2 Free. Associated Territories £5.5115 per 100 kg or Full.
	1 July–15 April	12.4% *ad valorem*	M–6% C_1 6.4% C_2 Free Associated Territories 10%

Notes: M rate applies to existing EEC members.
C_1 rate applies to produce coming from the Commonwealth Preference Area.
C_2 rate applies to produce coming from the Commonwealth countries who are eligible to negotiate status with the EEC.
Associated States rate applies to these countries who had free entry into the original EEC under the Yaounde agreement.

	Period	*General rate*	*Exceptions*
Denmark	1 May–15 May	10.9% *ad valorem*	EEC countries 4.5%
	16 May–30 June	24.4% *ad valorem*	EEC countries 18.0%
	1 July–30 April	6.4% *ad valorem*	EEC countries Free
Switzerland	All year	7 Fr/100 kg gross	–
Sweden	1 May–30 June	100 kg/100 kg net	–
	1 July–30 April	Free	

Denmark and the UK are bringing their tariffs into alignment with the EEC tariff of 16% and full harmonisation will be reached on 1st January 1978. On that date the only countries having free access to the Danish and UK markets will be other EEC members; with the exception of Morocco all other suppliers to the enlarged EEC will have to pay the full rate as there is no tariff reduction for asparagus under either the Lomé Convention or under the Generalised System of Preferences.

The EEC is negotiating agreements with her trading partners in the Mediterranean, including Morocco. The only agreement published so far is that for Israel and no concessions were granted to asparagus.

It is appropriate at this stage to discuss the possible effects in the UK market of the new tariff structure resulting from her entry into the EEC. This discussion relates to the final situation, rather than the transitional period.

1. EEC countries who export asparagus, notably France, Italy and the Netherlands, will face no tariff barrier and will have better prospects on the UK market. Any third countries hoping to supply this market in May/June will face severe competition from EEC producers and so it would be inadvisable for them to send supplies at this time of the year.

2. Countries, eg USA, Mexico, at present paying the 10% tariff will have to pay the increased rate of 16% but in view of the general inflationary situation it is not felt that this will make much difference to demand.

3. Commonwealth countries will lose their tariff advantage and will be competing on equal terms with all suppliers outside the EEC (Morocco excepted at present). It is possible that some present Commonwealth suppliers will find the UK market unremunerative in the future and supplies from near non-European countries, such as Tunisia, may increase.

PHYTO-SANITARY REGULATIONS

Asparagus is not subject to any specific phyto-sanitary restrictions on importation although when imported into Germany asparagus, like other produce, must be free of certain chemical residues.[1]

[1] German regulation on plant protectants, pesticides and storage protectants in or on foods of vegetable origin. Produced by the Federal Ministries of Health and of Food, Agriculture and Forestry 30 November 1966.

Part V

Prospects

Asparagus is only "in season" for about two months of the year in any of the countries under consideration and it might therefore be thought that an opportunity exists for supplying to these countries in the out-of-season period. However, from the evidence available it appears that in most countries there does not exist a large demand for out-of-season asparagus.

Several reasons can be put forward for this lack of demand. In most countries there is considerable domestic production of relatively low priced asparagus and consequently it is consumed in season by a wide public, including relatively low wage or salary earners, and sold in many retail outlets. Clearly the bulk of these consumers would be unable to pay the high prices that would prevail for asparagus imported in the winter and it seems that those people whose earnings are high enough have not shown sufficient interest to encourage importers to take the risks involved. Indeed in most countries with a sizeable consumption fresh asparagus seems to have the image of "a seasonal treat". There is a very limited production of forced asparagus in the winter in both France and Belgium which meets nearly all the demand of the few consumers who are prepared to pay a high price for the vegetable and the domestic season is also anticipated to a limited extent by supplies obtained from North African countries, notably Tunisia. In the out-of-season period there are plentiful supplies of canned asparagus which is much cheaper than air-freighted fresh asparagus and is a very acceptable substitute.

These factors have meant that there is very little demand in most European countries for out-of-season asparagus and this situation is likely to remain unaltered.

However, there are two relatively large markets for air-freighted asparagus; the UK and Italy. The Italian market has shown considerable growth over the years. However, the USA is virtually the only supplier to this market and import prices are not very high. The prospects for a new supplier to the Italian market are not thought to be very encouraging.

In the UK there is quite a large out-of-season demand for asparagus. This is somewhat surprising in view of the small consumption of asparagus overall – consumption of fresh asparagus (domestic production plus imports) is about 1 000 tonnes per annum and canned, which depends entirely on imports, is between 2 000 and 3 000 tonnes per year. The consuming public is small and sales are confined mainly to luxury hotels, restaurants and high class fruiterers, regardless of the time of year. Even in the domestic season prices of fresh asparagus are high and sales are virtually confined to the gourmet who is also able to afford high prices; he is apparently prepared to pay the even higher winter-time prices for imported produce. Another reason for the high level of out-of-season imports may be the importance of London as a commercial centre and the associated entertaining. Although this market is dominated by supplies from the USA, small quantities do come from other supplying countries and there is a slight gap in supplies between September and December, which a new supplier could fill.

Appendix A

List of importers

Note: The following list gives the names of some of the firms which are known to the Tropical Products Institute to be trading in this commodity, but the list should not be regarded as exhaustive. Inclusion in the list does not imply that TPI has any knowledge of the financial standing of the firms.

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

Harder, Meiser & Co
28 Breitenweg
Bremen

BELGIUM/LUXEMBOURG

Lecoq
19 Boulevard d'Ypres
Brussels

John van Haecht
11 rue de Lauwers
Hoeilaart
Brussels

Unifruit
27 Boulevard d'Ypres
Brussels

UNITED KINGDOM

American Fruit Importers Ltd.,
Stands 1–7, Trading Hall No. 1
Western International Market
Hayes Road
Southall,
Middlesex

Broome and Green (London) Ltd.,
A165–170 Fruit and Vegetable Market
New Covent Garden Market
London SW8

Francis Nicholls Group
London Fruit Exchange
Spitalfields
London E1 6HG

Griffin and Brand (European) Ltd
77 Brushfield Street
London E1

T J Poupart Ltd
D153–162 Fruit and Vegetable Market
New Covent Garden Market
London SW8

Ridley and Houlding Ltd
C148–150 Fruit and Vegetable Market
New Covent Garden Market
London SW8

J O Sims Ltd
Winchester Walk
Borough Market
London SE1 9AQ

DENMARK

Kobenhauns Frugtauktioner Ltd
Frugtmarkedet 17
2500 Copenhagen–Valby

Th. Olesen
Frugtmarkedt 1
Copenhagen
DK 2500 Valby

FRANCE

Ets E Azoulay et Cie
2 rue des Tropiques
CIDEX E-108
94538 Rungis

Societe Pomona
36 rue d'Angers
Min de Paris–Rungis
(94) Rungis

NETHERLANDS

Jan de Geus NV
Central Market
Hal 9–13
Amsterdam

SWEDEN

ICA Frukt Och Gronsaker AB
5 Faktmastaregaten
Halsingborg

Moller & Co AB
23–25 Importorvagen
S-121 73 Johanneshov
Stockholm

S J Norman AB
5 Styrmansgaten
Stockholm 15

SWITZERLAND

J Berri
67 Sihlquai
8005 Zurich

G Helfer
74 Grand Rue
1110 Morges

Appendix B

Common standards of quality for asparagus

I. DEFINITION OF PRODUCT

This standard relates to the stems of *"Asparagus officinalis L."* for supply to the consumer fresh, excluding asparagus for processing.

Asparagus is classified in three groups according to colour:

1. White asparagus
2. Purple asparagus (the tip being pink to violet or purple in colour)
3. Green asparagus (the tip and part of the stem being green in colour). "This standard does not apply to asparagus of less than 10 mm in respect of diameter, put up in homogeneous batches."

II. QUALITY SPECIFICATION

A. General

The purpose of the standard is to define quality requirements for asparagus at the despatching stage, after preparation and packaging.

B. Minimum requirements

The asparagus must be:

– whole;

– of fresh appearance and smell;

– sound;

– free from damage by rodents or infestation by insects;

– practically free from bruising;

– clean, that is, practically free from soil or dirt of any other kind;

– free from excessive external moisture, that is, adequately dried after washing, if any (washing of stems being permitted but not steeping);

– free from foreign taste or smell.

The stems must as far as possible be cut off clean at the base, at right angles to the stem.

The asparagus must have undergone no treatment after gathering, other than chilling to preserve or restore its fresh appearance.

Furthermore, the stems must not be hollow nor split nor stripped nor broken. Small cracks occurring after gathering are allowed, however, provided they do not exceed the maxima set out under the heading "Tolerances". The condition of the produce must be such that it can withstand transport and handling and meet commercial requirements at the place of destination.

C. Classification

(i) *"Extra" Class*

Asparagus stems in this class must be well shaped and practically straight. Allowing for the normal characteristics of the group to which they belong, they must be very tight-tipped.

Only very slight traces of rust are permitted, subject to their being removable in normal scraping by the consumer.

In the white asparagus group, the tips and stems must be white; only a slight pinkish tinge appearing after gathering is tolerated on the stems.

For white and purple asparagus, no incipient woodiness is permitted; for green asparagus, slight incipient woodiness is permitted.

For more attractive presentation, where asparagus is put up in bundles, the outer stems in the bundle may be cut at a slightly bevelled angle reaching not more than 1 cm up the stem.

(ii) *Class I*

Asparagus stems in this class must be well shaped.

They may be slightly bent.

Allowing for the normal characteristics of the group to which they belong, they must be tight-tipped.

Slight traces of rust are permitted, subject to their being removable in normal scraping by the consumer.

In the white asparagus group, stems are allowed with tips slightly tinged before gathering and stems in which a pink colour has appeared after gathering, in so far as such colouration disappears in cooking.

In the white asparagus group, woody stems are not allowed. In the purple and green asparagus groups, the stems may show incipient woodiness.

(iii) *Class II*

As compared with the preceding class, the stems may be less well shaped, more bent and less tight-tipped.

Traces of rust are permitted, subject to their being removable by scraping.

The stems may be slightly woody.

The tips of white asparagus may be coloured, except green.

III. SIZING

Sizing is determined by length and diameter.

A. Sizing by length

The length of the stems must be:

– between 17 and 22 cm for long asparagus,

– between 12 and 17 cm for short asparagus,

– between 12 and 22 cm for Class II asparagus put up in layers, not bundled,

– less than 12 cm for "asparagus tips".

However, green asparagus stems may be up to 27 cm maximum length provided that at least one-third of their length is green coloured.

B. Sizing by diameter

The diameter of the stems is the diameter of the cross-section midway along the length.

Minimum diameters and the relevant sizes are as set out hereunder:

Class	Minimum diameter	Size	
Extra	12 mm	12 to 16 mm	16 mm and over, with maximum disparity 8 mm within any one package or bundle.
I	10 mm	10 to 16 mm	16 mm and over, with maximum disparity 10 mm within any one package or bundle.
II	10 mm		No uniformity prescribed.

IV. TOLERANCES

Tolerances in respect of quality and size are allowed in each package for produce not satisfying the requirements for its class.

A. Quality tolerances

(i) *"Extra" Class*

5% by weight or by number of stems not satisfying the requirements for "Extra" Class but satisfying those for Class I, or with slight unhealed cracks occurring after gathering.

(ii) *Class I*

10% by weight or by number of stems not satisfying the requirements for Class I but satisfying those for Class II, or with slight unhealed cracks occurring after gathering.

(iii) *Class II*

10% by weight or by number of stems not satisfying the requirements for Class II, but fit for human consumption.

B. Size tolerances

10% by weight or by number of stems varying from the limits set, the maximum disparity not to exceed 1 cm in respect of length and 2 mm in respect of diameter, however.

V. PACKAGING AND PRESENTATION

A. Uniformity

The contents of each package or each bundle in any one package must be uniform and must include only stems of the same class, colour group and size, insofar in respect of the latter criterion as grading for size is required.

However, stems not conforming in colour are permitted up to the following maxima:

– in white asparagus: 10% of purple asparagus.

– in purple or green asparagus: 10% differing in colour.

B. Packaging

Packaging must be such as to give the produce suitable protection.

Any paper or other material used inside the package must be new and harmless to human food. When printed matter is used, the printing must be on the outside only, so as not to come into contact with the produce.

The produce when packaged must be free from any foreign bodies.

Asparagus may be put up in one of the following ways:

(i) In bundles (firmly tied) of 0.5, 1 or 2 kg.

The stems in the outer row of each bundle must correspond in appearance and dimensions with the average of those contained in the bundle.

Asparagus put up in this way must be of uniform length.

The bundles must be arranged in even layers within the package; each bundle may be protected by paper.

The bundles in any one package must be of uniform weight and length.

(ii) Layered in the package, not bundled.

VI. MARKING

Each package must bear the following particulars legibly and indelibly marked on the outside:

A. Identification

Packer
Despatcher } Name and address or code mark.

B. Nature of produce

"Asparagus" plus the word "white", "purple" or "green" when the contents of the package are not visible, together with the word "short" or "tips" where applicable.

C. Origin of produce

District of origin, or national, regional or local trade name.

D. Commercial Specifications

- Class
- Size: maximum and minimum diameter or stems or the words "not graded for size"
- number of bundles and weight per bundle where put up in bundles.

E. Official control mark (optional)

CLASS III

This class consists of products of marketable quality which cannot be classified in a high class, but which satisfy the requirements defined below.

Quality requirements

Asparagus in Class III must satisfy the requirements laid down in the common standard for Class II. However the tips may be slightly open and the tips of white asparagus may have a slight colouring, including pale green.

In addition, the cut at the base of the stem may be oblique in relation to the vertical.

Sizing

The provisions laid down for Class II in Title III of the common standards shall apply to asparagus in Class III.

Tolerances

Each package may contain at most:—

15% by weight or number of stems which do not satisfy the requirements of the class including the minimum requirements for such products. However such products must be of marketable quality and be suitable for consumption.

10% by weight or number of stems which do not comply with the rules fixed for sizing.

Packaging and presentation

A. Homogeneity

In each of the colour groups, a maximum of 10% of stems of another colour is permitted.

Camouflage is not permitted, that is to say that the visible part must correspond to the average composition of the goods.

B. Packaging

The provisions laid down in Title V B of the common standards shall apply to asparagus in Class III.

Marking

The provisions laid down in Title VI of the common standards shall apply to asparagus in Class III.

Source: *European Communities Secondary Legislation* Part 28. Fruit and Vegetables Section 1 and 2. HMSO.

Printed in England for Her Majesty's Stationery Office by Hobbs the Printers Ltd, Southampton
(1400) Dd357534 3M 11/75 G3313